

**BUTTE COUNTY**

**GENERAL PLAN**

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

**SCENIC HIGHWAYS  
ELEMENT**

**ADOPTED MARCH 15, 1977**





## SCENIC HIGHWAYS ELEMENT

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# REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE

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## SCENIC HIGHWAYS ELEMENT

### A. GENERAL

#### 1. State Requirements

Section 65302(h) of the Government Code requires county general plans to include a Scenic Highways Element "...for the development, establishment, and protection of scenic highways pursuant to the provisions of...the Streets and Highways Code."

The General Plan guidelines adopted by the Council on Intergovernmental Relations in 1973 state that the Scenic Highways Element should include an identification and evaluation of scenic corridors, a map of designated routes, a statement of policies, and a guide to implementation.

#### 2. Planning Relationships

The designation of scenic highways can have a significant impact on physical development and should, therefore, be coordinated with other development controls. Special attention should be given to existing scenic highway designations by the State, by adjacent counties, and by the incorporated cities in Butte County. The routes selected in the Scenic Highway Element should not conflict with the objectives of other elements of the Butte County General Plan. Designation should reflect the County's policies expressed in the Land Use, Open Space, Conservation, and Circulation Elements.

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### 3. Definitions

- Scenic Highway - For the purpose of this element, a Scenic Highway is defined as a main public road through an area of picturesque natural landscapes. The Scenic Highway includes not only the pavement or traveled roadway but also the entire publicly-owned right-of-way. Customary accessory uses usually found in the right-of-way include bridges, drainage facilities, public utilities, walkways and trails, protective planting and landscaping, rest areas, and vista points.
- Scenic Corridor - The Scenic Corridor is often described as "the view from the road." The view may be a distant panorama as well as the immediate roadside area. Corridor width will vary depending on terrain, vegetation, and development. A corridor should encompass the outstanding natural features and picturesque landscapes which qualify the highway as "scenic."
- Eligible State Scenic Highways - Eligible State Scenic Highways are those state highways shown on the Master Plan of State Scenic Highways. In Butte County only Highway 70 north of Highway 149 is eligible for state designation as an Official State Scenic Highway.
- Official State Scenic Highways - Official State Scenic Highways are those eligible routes whose scenic corridors are protected by a county-developed plan which has been found satisfactory and is adopted by the State Scenic Highway Advisory Committee.



There is a lot of talk about the importance of the environment in the business world. It is often said that companies should be socially responsible and that they should care about the environment. However, in reality, many companies are not doing enough to protect the environment. They are not investing enough in renewable energy, and they are not doing enough to reduce their carbon footprint. This is a problem because the environment is essential for our survival. If we do not take action now, we will be unable to sustain our way of life in the future.

One of the main reasons why companies are not doing enough to protect the environment is that they are not seeing the benefits of doing so. They are not realizing that a healthy environment is essential for their long-term success. If the environment is destroyed, then there will be no one left to buy their products. Therefore, companies should be encouraged to invest in environmental protection. They should be given incentives to do so, and they should be held accountable for their actions.

Another reason why companies are not doing enough to protect the environment is that they are not being held accountable. There are no laws or regulations that require companies to protect the environment. This means that they can do whatever they want without any consequences. Therefore, governments should be encouraged to create laws and regulations that require companies to protect the environment. They should be held accountable for their actions, and they should be given incentives to do so.

Finally, there is a need for more education about the importance of the environment. Many people do not understand why it is important to protect the environment, and they do not know what they can do to help. Therefore, there should be more education about the environment in schools and in the media. People should be encouraged to take action to protect the environment, and they should be given the tools they need to do so.



- Official County Scenic Highways - Official County Scenic Highways include all county highways designated in a Scenic Highways Element of the General Plan and whose corridor protection plans are approved by the State.

## B. OBJECTIVES

Butte County has an outstanding variety of natural vistas and landscapes. In adopting a Scenic Highways Element, the County seeks to preserve the more visible portions of this natural scenery.

The primary objective of this element is the protection and enhancement of scenic areas adjacent to and visible from selected highways. This effort is consistent with recommendations of the adopted Butte County General Plan Open Space and Conservation elements and reflects the County's general goal of maintaining a high quality of life for its residents.

Secondary objectives are to:

- Guide future scenic preservation activities
- Direct the development of specific legislation and programs by the County of Butte
- Coordinate the State Scenic Highways Program with local policies
- Heighten awareness of the visual environment and spur community pride in our natural resources

Official County Board Highway & Bridges Committee  
County Highway Board all County Highway  
Department to a County Highway Board of the  
County Board and other County Highway Board  
and approved by the Board

## 2. Highway

County Board has an Executive Committee of County Board  
and Highway Board. In addition to County Highway Board, the  
County Board is empowered to make various orders of this  
nature.

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## C. CORRIDOR EVALUATION AND SELECTION

For the purpose of evaluating the highways in Butte County, "main public roads" include all state highways and county rural arterials, collectors, and through roads. The only long unpaved sections evaluated were mountain roads designated as arterials or collectors by the County Department of Public Works. Evaluation was done by Planning Department staff after on-site viewing from the road and from turnouts and vista points. Most roads were divided into sectors for evaluation purposes because of distinct changes in natural and man-made features. Each road and road sector was evaluated by using the following general criteria.

### System Characteristics (Relation to Scenic Highway System)

- Closeness and convenience to urban population centers
- Entry at County boundaries and urban centers
- Integration into system; connection and intersection with other highways
- Access to major recreation areas

### Right-of-Way Characteristics

- Road surface and alignment; safety
- Lack of traffic, stops, and access points; safety
- Wide shoulders, turnouts, rest areas and vista points, and space for such

### Natural Corridor Characteristics

- Variation in slopes, elevation, and terrain
- Visible rock strata and prominent land forms
- Clarity, depth, and width of vistas, especially horizon silhouettes and known landmarks
- Abundance and variety of plant forms, especially forests





- Abundance and variety of native animals, especially deer and riparian birds
- Visibility and accessibility of creeks, rivers, marshes, and lakes

#### Man-Made Corridor Characteristic

- Low population densities; small population clusters
- Lack of structures, especially signs, business and utility structures
- Land-oriented uses, including agriculture, live-stock grazing, timber management, and recreation
- Used by vacationers and leisure travelers; access to campgrounds, parks, trails, or boat ramps
- Historic landmarks, structures, and routes

#### Government Policies

- Land management by government agencies, especially the U. S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, and State Departments of Water Resources and Parks and Recreation
- Eligible State Scenic highway, County "Scenic Highway" zoning, or designation by cities or adjacent counties
- Consistent with other Butte County General Plan elements, especially Land Use, Open Space, Conservation, and Circulation

The application of the evaluation criteria was followed by consideration of other factors. Because all of the evaluation criteria are not necessarily equal in value, the uniqueness of a corridor's attributes was considered highly in the evaluation. Also weighed heavily was the consideration that a system of scenic highways should include a variety of distinct driving experiences. The evaluation also took into account the possible effects of designation on property rights, land use, traffic, and the local economy.



Roads which meet some of the criteria for designation as scenic highways are shown in Map V-1.

#### D. CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT AND PROTECTION

##### 1. Official State Designation

Although state law requires the County to adopt a Scenic Highways Element of the General Plan, it does not require the scenic highways proposed in the Element to be designated by the State as "official" State or County scenic highways. However, official designation qualifies the County for certain benefits. These include the placement of colorful "poppy" signs, indication of routes on State maps, undergrounding of utility lines, and the possible development of rest areas. In general terms, State designation and the ensuing benefits will require the County to request designation, survey each scenic corridor, and adopt a corridor protection program which is approved by the State. The detailed procedures for official State designation of scenic highways are contained in Appendix.

##### 2. Boundary Delineation

The Scenic Highway Report required for State designation suggests boundaries for the scenic corridors along each proposed scenic highway and describes the scenic elements within the suggested corridor. State guidelines for designation define the scenic corridor as "the area of land generally adjacent to and visible from the highway which requires protective measures to insure perpetuation of its scenic qualities."





The evaluation of corridor characteristics includes the scenic elements which qualified the highway for designation. The corridor should include outstanding natural elements such as water bodies, mature timber stands, wildlife habitats, and unique landforms as well as man-made dams, bridges, recreation facilities, historic sites, and architectural features. All types of landscapes, whether wild, cultivated, or urban, may have scenic values and can be considered for inclusion in a scenic corridor. Corridor features may be evaluated in terms of the visual impact of their distance, size, form, and color. Factors limiting the depth and range of visibility are critical to the delineation of scenic corridor boundaries.

The corridor also includes nearby land where human use or development may have an adverse effect on motorists traveling a scenic highway.

Other factors in corridor delineation are legal and administrative in nature. Existing public land ownership and the likelihood of some government acquisition should be considered. Since the scenic corridor will be an administrative area for land use regulations, the precise boundaries should coincide wherever feasible with property lines, zoning district boundaries, city limits, or other legal demarcations. Administrative purpose may in some cases even dictate boundaries of a constant arbitrary distance from the centerline of the highway.

Because of its significance and complexity, the delineation process should be undertaken carefully and with full involvement of all concerned parties. According to the guidelines for State designation, corridor boundaries should be determined by County staff and interested citizens.



### 3. Development Controls

#### a. Right-of-Way

In developing scenic highways, Section 261 of the Streets and Highways Code requires the State Department of Transportation to consider pleasing visual appearance and impact as well as safety, utility, and economy. Similarly, local governments are required to pay careful attention to earth-moving, landscaping, and the design of structures and facilities as a condition of State designation.

Development of scenic highway rights-of-way should consider the visual impact on the driver of curves, cuts, fills, bridges, drainage structures, road signs, guard rails, erosion controls, walkways, bikeways, plantings, and landscaping. The driving experience on a scenic highway can be enhanced by judicious control over points of traffic access and stopping. A further consideration is the need to control the location and design of utility lines and structures. Right-of-way development can be enhanced through the provision of areas to turn out, rest, view the scenery, and allow traffic to pass.

#### b. Adjacent Lands

The maintenance of a pleasing visual landscape along adopted scenic highways is largely dependent upon local controls over the development and use of private and public lands within scenic corridors. Consequently, the local jurisdiction's program for the protection and development of scenic corridors is the heart of the State's requirements for official designation and essential to the success of a system of scenic highways. According to State guidelines for designation, the local corridor protection program must





include regulation of land use, detailed land planning, control of outdoor advertising, careful construction practices, landscaping, and design review.

The corridors along the County's scenic highways now fall within several different zoning districts. Several of the most attractive routes were rezoned in the late 1960's to a S-H (Scenic Highway) classification which extends 350 feet from the centerline of selected highway sectors. As well as one residential dwelling per parcel and agricultural uses, the zone also allows with a use permit "highway services primarily for the convenience of the traveling public." The lack of restrictions on use in the A-2 zone, as well as the commercial provisions in the S-H zone, has allowed the development of scattered businesses along scenic highways. This dispersal of commercial uses (and their advertising displays) is generally in conflict with the objectives of the scenic highway program. Scenic qualities and the safety and convenience of travelers on scenic highways are enhanced by off-road shopping centers, as in Forest Ranch, or compact business districts, as in Stirling City.

Zoning of scenic corridors should maintain the natural characteristics of scenic corridors. Most of the valley routes and some in the mountains are zoned Agricultural, Timber-Mountain, and Timberland Preserve, which are intended to protect land-oriented rural uses. None allow commercial uses that are not closely related to natural resources and resource development activities. Nearly all zoning districts along scenic highways allow residential uses. The protection of scenic corridors may require the restriction of residential locations and densities.

The effects of development on scenic vistas can often be mitigated by locating structures farther away from the roadside.



The County now requires that all permanent structures be located at least 50 or 55 feet from the centerline of the road. This standard is the same for roads in rural and urban areas of the County.

Utility distribution lines can usually be placed out of sight. Lines and towers for power transmission can be placed as inconspicuously as possible and designed attractively.

Scenic qualities are affected by billboards or other large off-premise signs. The intrusion of signs into the natural landscape can be controlled by restrictions on their location, size, height, lighting, maintenance, and subject. Current County ordinances only control the street setback for signs and prohibit off-premise advertising in non-commercial areas.

Scenic values are affected by changes in the natural landscape, including burning of vegetation, site clearance, tree removal, grading, cutting, and filling. These activities can be covered by zoning regulations or special ordinances.

Protection of scenic corridors requires detailed study and planning. A specific plan will include all land in the corridor and will describe the County's program of protection and enhancement. The plan will deal with land use, the location and design of structures, the development of the right-of-way, and the provision of appropriate public services and facilities.

#### 4. Local Promotion

A scenic highways program will benefit from active local promotion in addition to official designation. To secure the possible economic benefits of scenic highway designation, the system needs to be advertised to potential visitors.





## E. POLICIES

Table 1 summarizes the findings discussed above, states the County's policy in response to the findings, and outlines implementation measures.



Table 1. SCENIC HIGHWAY ELEMENT

FINDINGS	POLICY	IMPLEMENTATION
1. Butte County has many areas of picturesque natural landscapes.	1. Protect valuable scenic areas for enjoyment by residents and visitors.	1. Consider development of a system of scenic highways, including Highway 32 north of Forest Ranch and Highway 70 north of Pentz-Magalia Highway
2. Scenic corridor boundaries should include areas visible from highways and outstanding natural or man-made features.	2. Delineate scenic corridors with careful consideration of all factors.	2. Consider State criteria. Survey scenic corridors. Solicit citizen participation through public hearings.
3. Development within a scenic highway right-of-way can have a significant impact on view.	3. Consider scenic values in the design and improvement of scenic highway rights-of-way.	3. Require Planning Commission annual review of major road projects to include concern for scenic values.
4. Numerous vehicle access points along scenic highways can impact driver safety.	4. Control access to scenic highways to maintain safety.	4. Utilize existing access where feasible. Limit encroachment permits for safety.
5. The unsightly appearance of utility lines and structures can be mitigated by inconspicuous siting and pleasing design.	5. Locate and design utility structures to minimize visual impact, where economically feasible.	5. Review the location and design of major future transmission lines. Require the least conspicuous location of distribution lines, where there is reasonable choice.
6. Protection of scenic corridors is largely dependent on local land use regulations.	6. Encourage compatible land use patterns in scenic corridors.	6. Amend zoning ordinance to implement County policy.
7. An effective scenic highways program requires active local involvement and support.	7. Promote the County's scenic highways program.	7. Indicate routes on public maps and plans. Place signs on adopted routes. Encourage advertising by Chambers of Commerce and others. Seek citizen participation in all aspects of program.
8. Designation of a scenic highway can affect the use and value of adjacent property.	8. Consider economic impacts on property affected by a scenic highway designation.	8. In considering any road designation as a scenic highway, a public hearing shall be held and all adjacent property owners shall be notified of the public hearing by mail, in addition to general notices published in a newspaper of general circulation.





County Scenic Highway

**SCENIC HIGHWAYS**  
SCENIC HIGHWAYS ELEMENT  
BUTTE COUNTY GENERAL PLAN

PLANNING	REV. 001
DEPARTMENT	REV. 002

MAP V-1







## SCENIC HIGHWAYS - SUPPORT DATA

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PROCEDURES FOR OFFICIAL STATE  
DESIGNATION OF SCENIC HIGHWAYS

ELIGIBILITY

To be designated as an Official State Scenic Highway, a State highway must be shown on the Master Plan of Scenic Highways and listed in Section 263 of the Streets and Highways Code. Highway 70 north of Highway 149 is the only State highway in Butte County indicated on the State's Master Plan. Routes were originally included in the Master Plan as a result of public hearings held throughout the State. New routes can be added only by action of the State Legislature. The State Scenic Highway Advisory Committee should be first requested to review proposed additions and to recommend their inclusion into the Master Plan. Any county road classified as a scenic highway by the County's Scenic Highway Element is similarly eligible for State designation as an Official County Scenic Highway.

Action. The County of Butte requests their legislative representatives and the State Scenic Highway Advisory Committee to consider the inclusion of all State highway sectors proposed in the Scenic Highways Element into the Master Plan of Scenic Highways.

STUDIES

The legislative body having jurisdiction over lands adjacent to eligible State and County Highways has the responsibility for initiation of corridor studies leading to official designation. For a State highway, the Board of Supervisors of a county must request by resolution to the District Director of Transportation that a corridor survey and a highway facility study be made. The State Scenic Highway Advisory Committee will then review the natural scenic merit of the proposed highway sector. If the Advisory Committee determines that the route has good potential for official designation, the District Scenic Highway Coordinator of the Department of Transportation will be so advised and will conduct the survey and study. The results of the corridor survey and highway facility study will be summarized by District staff in a single Scenic Highway Report. The report will contain maps, photographs, and other necessary documentation showing:





- Suggested scenic highway corridor boundaries
- Scenic elements within the suggested corridor
- The relationship of the roadway to its surrounding environment
- Proposed realignments or improvements of the route
- Potential locations of roadside rests, vista points, and areas for public or commercial information sites

The report will be prepared in cooperation with local government staff. As early as possible, the local jurisdiction should solicit the help and advice of local citizens' committees, affected property owners, conservation groups and anyone else who might be interested in the proposed designation. Early involvement of citizens and ample time for review and comment will result in corridor boundaries which reflect local desires and reduce the possibility of last minute controversy.

The procedure for State designation of official County scenic highways requires that the local government initiate and conduct the corridor survey and highway facility study and prepare the Scenic Highway Report.

Action. The Board of Supervisors requests that a Scenic Highway Report be prepared for each eligible State and County highway in Butte County. County staff assists in the preparation of reports and solicits the assistance of all interested parties.

#### CORRIDOR PROTECTION PROGRAM

Upon completion and approval by involved parties, the Scenic Highway Report is used by the local jurisdiction in the preparation of a local scenic corridor protection and enhancement plan and program. The local program should provide for the protection and enhancement of the existing natural and man-made scenic resources that helped qualify the highway as eligible for designation and that are described in the Scenic Highway Report. The minimum requirements which must be met by the local jurisdiction include:

- Regulation of land use which may include density and/or the intensity of development
- Detailed land and site planning



- Control of outdoor advertising
- Careful attention to and control of earthmoving and landscaping
- Design and appearance of structures and equipment

Action. The County adopts a program of regulations and standards as a "Corridor Protection Program".

#### STATE APPROVAL

The local scenic corridor protection program should be reviewed by the District Scenic Highway Coordinator during preparation for its fulfillment of State guidelines. Upon adoption, the local program should be sent to the District Coordinator along with a written request for official designation. He will then forward to the Department of Transportation Headquarters the program and request along with his comments and the Scenic Highway Report. Headquarters staff next reviews the written materials and calls a meeting of the Scenic Highway Advisory Committee.

The Committee consists of seven members appointed by the Governor from among local officials, persons competent in landscape architecture, scenic conservation, land planning, and park problems. Their duties are to counsel the Transportation Department concerning standards for scenic highways and the actual designation of Official State and County Scenic Highways. After review of the proposed designation, the Committee sends their findings and recommendation to the Department Director. If and when the Director determines that the local corridor protection program has been implemented by local government agencies, he declares State highways to be Official State Scenic Highways and authorizes local officials to declare County roads as Official County Scenic Highways.

Action. The County requests review by CALTRANS during preparation of the corridor protection program. After adoption of measures to implement the corridor protection program, the County requests State approval of the program and official State designation.

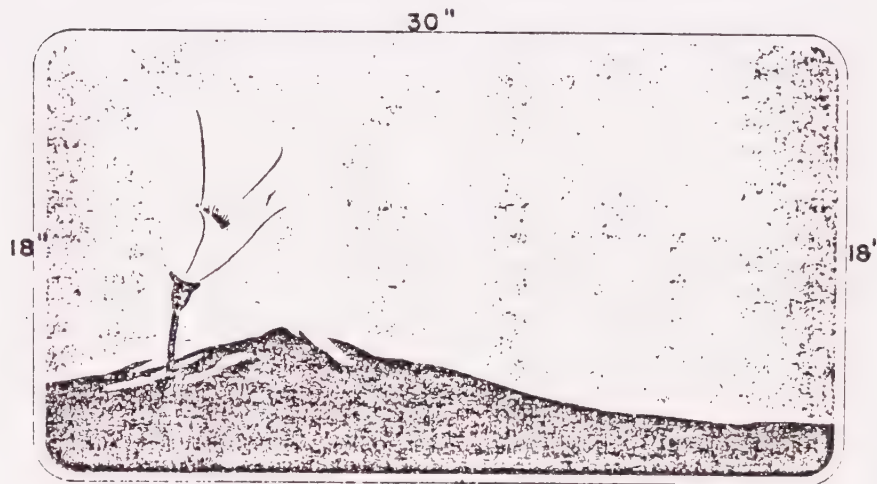
#### BENEFITS

The State Transportation Department must indicate designated scenic highways in any documents or maps issued to the public. Maps distributed by the California State Automobile Association and some oil companies also show designated scenic highways.



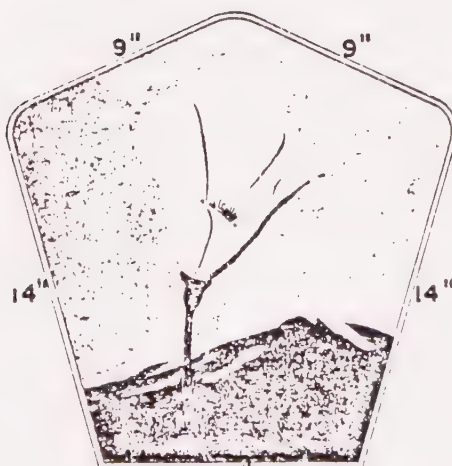
CALTRANS must also place and maintain appropriate signs along designated State highways indicating their status. The official CALTRANS signs portray an orange poppy, the official State flower, against a blue sky and a snow-capped mountain. The relative sizes and shapes of official signs are illustrated below. Rectangular signs can only be placed on designated State highways and 5-sided signs only on designated County highways. It is the responsibility of the County to purchase, place and maintain signs on designated County scenic highways. 'Poppy' signs are usually placed just below existing signs showing route numbers or names.

## SCENIC HIGHWAY SIGNS

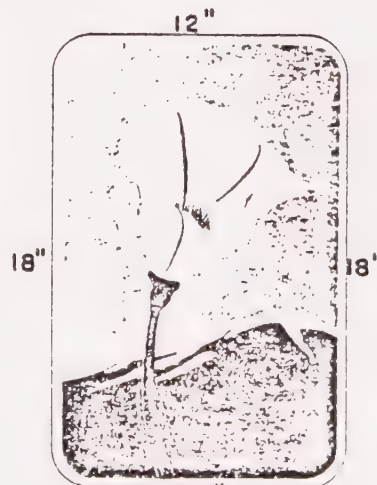


STATE 30" FREEWAYS

STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
BUSINESS AND TRANSPORTATION AGENCY  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS



COUNTY HIGHWAYS



STATE HIGHWAYS





In implementing Section 320 of the Public Utilities Code, the Public Utilities Commission ordered that no utility or communication utility, whether privately or publicly owned, shall install overhead distribution facilities which are within 1,000 feet of the right-of-way of an official designated State or County scenic highway and which could be seen by travelers on the highway. Undergrounding is not required if the Commission is shown and finds that undergrounding would not be feasible or would be inconsistent with sound environmental planning.

The Scenic Highway Report contains a description of potential locations of roadside rests, vista points and information areas along each highway. Section 155 of the Streets and Highways Code allows CALTRANS to accept gifts of money or property to establish memorial rest areas at points of scenic, historical or cultural interest along State scenic highways. The Scenic Highway Advisory Committee has also recommended recently that the State fund this type of amenity with the personalized license plate fund (Environmental Protection Program).

Action. The County requests CALTRANS to indicate all officially-designated scenic highways in Butte County on public maps and roadside signs. The County requests undergrounding of utility distribution lines in designated scenic highway corridors. The County encourages CALTRANS to build and maintain rest areas and vista points at suitable locations along designated State scenic highways in Butte County.

In 1912, the first of the three bridges was built. The second bridge was built in 1925 and the third bridge was built in 1935. The first bridge was built by the city of St. Louis and the second bridge was built by the state of Missouri. The third bridge was built by the federal government. The first bridge was built by the city of St. Louis and the second bridge was built by the state of Missouri. The third bridge was built by the federal government.

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## CONSULTATIONS

Richard Young, District Scenic Highways Coordinator, California  
Department of Transportation, Marysville District

## REFERENCES

California Department of Transportation, July 1975. *The  
Scenic Route: A Guide for the Official Designation of  
Scenic Highways.*

California Department of Transportation, January 1976.  
*State Scenic Highway Program: 1975 Progress Report.*

### General Plan Scenic Highway Elements

City of Chico  
City of Oroville  
County of Alameda  
County of Kern  
County of Lassen  
County of Placer  
County of Plumas  
County of Sacramento  
County of Shasta  
County of Sierra  
County of Trinity  
County of Yuba  
Tri-County (Colusa, Glenn, and Tehama Counties)



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Department of Transportation, California  
Office of Highway Safety, Sacramento, California

San Francisco

California Department of Transportation, 1975  
Statewide Highway Safety Program, 1975

California Department of Transportation, 1975  
Statewide Highway Safety Program, 1975

San Francisco Highway Safety Council

- City of San Francisco
- City of Berkeley
- County of Alameda
- County of Butte
- County of Colusa
- County of Contra Costa
- County of El Dorado
- County of Fresno
- County of Inyo
- County of Kern
- County of Kings
- County of Lake
- County of Los Angeles
- County of Marin
- County of Mendocino
- County of Nevada
- County of Orange
- County of Placer
- County of San Bernardino
- County of San Diego
- County of San Francisco
- County of Santa Clara
- County of Santa Cruz
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- County of Sutter
- County of Tehama
- County of Trinity
- County of Yuba

San Francisco Highway Safety Council, 1975